

Trinity Church
Swedesboro, Gloucester County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Trinity Church
Swedesboro, Gloucester County, New Jersey

Owner: The Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of Trinity Church

Date of Erection: 1784, tower erected 1836-'38,
church renovated 1854

Architect:

Builder: Isaac Van Neamen - mason
Ezechial Foster - carpenter

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: One and gallery

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - brick

Interior walls - wainscoting and plaster

Outside chimney

Roof - pitch, slate

Historical Data:

The property upon which this church stands had a Swedish title, which was ignored by the English, and an English title which goes back to the grant of Charles II to the Duke of York. The land upon which the church was built was bought from John Hugg, Jr.; Hugg deeded on September 1, 1703, to Wollo Dalbo,

William Cobb, Wollo Peterson, and Frederick Hopeman, church wardens, one hundred acres.

The Swedes who settled in the vicinity of what is now Swedesboro attended services in the Christina Church in Wilmington, Delaware. The Christina Church record for May 1, 1702 contains an entry made by the Reverend Mr. Biork:

"Part of my congregation of the other side of the river, Jersey side so called, are minded to break up from me and the Church on this side, taking a minister for themselves and uniting with them on the other side of the Rattcong Creek".

The survey of the ground along the Rattcong (Raccoon) Creek by Richard Bull in 1702 shows a log church had been erected; it was consecrated on the third Sunday after Trinity in 1705. Sometime during the pastorate of Reverend Mr. Tranburg (1726-1740) a new gallery was built in the church; also in his tenure, 1731, the communion service of beaten silver, still in use, was procured.

A school was conducted by the parish in connection with the church. The first schoolmaster came from Sweden in 1706. In 1715, Dr. Jasper Swedenborg, brother of Emanuel, founder of the sect that bears his name, was schoolmaster.

A rectory was built in 1765 during the incumbency of Reverend Mr. Wicksell. This building is still in existence, having been moved from its original location on Main Street since this time and considerably altered.

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In the records of Trinity Church (Volume III) the Reverend Dr. Nicholas Collins gives an account of the work done on the building of the present church in Swedesborough. He also gives an account of the Swedish settlement along the Delaware. He mentions that the Swedes had "three distinct rectorships, to wit - Wicacoa with Kingessing and Upper Merion in Pennsylvania; Christina in Delaware; and Racoon with Pensneck in West Jersey.....Til the beginning of this century Racoon and Pensneck made parts of the congregation over the river; the first Wicacoa, and the other of Christina. In the year 1704 a church was built where the new church of Swedesborough now stands."

In 1784 the Reverend Dr. Collins persuaded the congregation to build the present church. He gives an account of this work in which he states that the congregation hesitated to build larger than 50 by 40 feet. In his account we find that in the autumn of the year of 1783 a contract was made with Felix Fisler to furnish the bricks. Fisler was to receive one pound seventeen shillings six pence per thousand, and Isaac Van Neamen was to do the mason work at two dollars per thousand. He was also to furnish the stones for the foundation at six shilling a perch.

In the spring of 1784 Ezechial Foster undertook to do the carpentry work for the sum of three hundred pounds. The work was continued throughout 1784. The building was enclosed before Christmas. Dr. Collins records that:

"Heavy rain in the late months spoiled a considerable quantity of bricks already hauled to the church. The approach of winter and want of money permitted not

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the purchase of a new supply. It was therefore necessary to contrive small ovens for drying such as were tolerable. I was, myself, very busy at this work many cold mornings and evenings, by which I contracted a severe rheumatic disorder, which continued for a long time."

This building was as it now stands with the omission of the tower. Before the church could be used, Dr. Collins tells us it was necessary to put on a new roof, Dr. Collins gives a description of this incident. Another interesting occurrence during the building of the church is recorded by Dr. Collins; the wood used for the columns under the galleries was not seasoned and an extra price was paid for boring them. Apparently this was not very successful because later on the Reverend Mr. Feltus (1801-1807) makes a note in the records that in spite of the boring they were split. Since the present columns are sound, these green ones must have been replaced.

Much difficulty was experienced in collecting the money for the erection of the church; the vestry records give evidence of it. The total cost of the church was fifteen hundred and four pounds, nineteen shillings, and nine pence; for finishing the sum of three hundred and fifty-five pounds was paid, and later sixty-eight pounds and fourteen shillings for painting; thus the entire cost was nineteen hundred twenty-eight pounds, thirteen shillings, and five pence.

The church was originally Swedish; now it is used by the Episcopalians. Dr. Collins after the Revolution stayed in America although he was eligible for promotion in Sweden. In 1786 he was transferred to Gloria Dei in Philadelphia. There was a cessation of the Swedish mission and the

wardens and vestrymen, after a vacancy of more than two years, agreed that Mr. John Wade, a preacher ordained by the German Lutheran ministry, officiate in the church for one year. At the expiration of this time, 1789, Mr. John Croes was engaged to officiate on trial. He was called and became the regular pastor of the church on condition that he be regularly ordained in the Protestant Episcopal Church, which he later did. Later on he became the first Protestant Episcopal Bishop of New Jersey.

In the church yard are the graves of men who served in the Revolution such as Colonel Robert Brown, Colonel Bodo Otto, Jr. (NJ-46), Colonel Thomas Heston, Captain John Daniels, and Doctor Henry Land.

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Walter C. Hall
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, A.I.A.
District Officer

Rev. Jan. 25 '37 T.W.